



STATE OF WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Women's Council

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PRESS RELEASE

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WISCONSIN WOMEN'S COUNCIL REPORTS "NO PROGRESS" IN THE NUMBER OF WOMEN HOLDING ELECTED OFFICE IN STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN WISCONSIN

The number of women holding elected offices in state, city, county and school district governments on Wisconsin declined, overall, with a net loss of seats from 2005 to 2007. During this period, the number of female state legislators reached its lowest level in two decades.

New County Scorecards provide a local resource to assess the face of government in individual communities, including local benchmarks and information on the share of women office holders compared to statewide averages for each county, city and school district in Wisconsin.

(Madison, WI) The Wisconsin Women's Council today released its second benchmark of women in elected office in Wisconsin. The report covers nearly 7,000 offices across state, county, city and school district governments in our state, finding that despite the increases in women elected officials in top leadership positions statewide and nationally, no progress was made in the share of elected offices held by women in local government in Wisconsin over the 2005 to 2007 period and women's representation in many state and local elected offices has declined.

New in 2007 is detailed information on women office holders for every county, city and school district government in Wisconsin. County Scorecards provide locality-specific information on women office holders compared to statewide averages, along with rankings within each level of government. These Scorecards provide a local resource to better understand gaps and opportunities in women's participation in elected offices across our state. The report, *Wisconsin Women in Local Government: 2007 Benchmark Study*, and the Women in Elected Office County Scorecards are available online at: <http://womencouncil.wi.gov>.

Whether in the corporate board room or the City Hall, advancing women's leadership and creating a community where women and men can lead together, is critical to Wisconsin's social and economic future.

"As Wisconsin's entrepreneurs, teachers, artists, scientists, mothers, daughters, and wives - women have played a vital role in Wisconsin's heritage and economic well-being," Governor Doyle said. "Their full participation is vital as we continue to build a vibrant future for the next generation of Wisconsin citizens."

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Key Findings

- Statewide, women make up about 29 percent of elected and high-level appointed offices in federal, state, tribal, county, city and school district governments in Wisconsin, but only about 10 percent of leadership positions such as mayor, council president and county board chair.
- Among elected governing (policy) bodies, women make up about 18% of County Board members, 19% of City Council members and 37% of School Board members.
- Women make up 70 to 90 percent of elected (administrative) offices such as Clerk, Treasurer, Clerk of the Courts and Register of Deeds – except in Wisconsin's largest counties where men are up to three times more likely to hold these positions.
- The number of women serving as Mayors of Wisconsin cities increased from 18 in 2005 to 21 in 2007. Though the net increase is small, there has been increased activity in women seeking the office of mayor.
- Many communities still have no women in local government. Thirty-nine of the 190 cities in Wisconsin (21 percent) have no women City Council members, including the City of Milwaukee. Combined, about nine percent of Wisconsin's county boards, city councils and school districts have no women members—representing over one million Wisconsin residents.
- When it comes to leadership, size matters. Governing bodies with a greater share of women members are significantly more likely to have women in the top leadership positions. Among city councils and school boards, for example, the likelihood of having a female board president increases markedly only when women hold 40 percent or more of a board's seats.

As we move through the 2008 election season, these new benchmarks will provide the means to track women's progress in holding elected office across Wisconsin and offer local communities important information for increasing diversity in local government and building the pipeline of women for higher offices in our federal, state and local governments.

"By bringing more qualified women to the political table, we don't just make our government more representative of our population, we add diverse perspectives and insights to the decision making process," said Kris Martinsek, Women's Council Chair. "Recent research within the corporate sector shows that diversity in leadership contributes to bottom line business success. Growing the number of women in all levels of government throughout the state is a must as we seek innovation and fresh ideas to make government more efficient and accountable and work to ensure our public policies are robust and reflective of the goals and values of all of our citizens."

For more information about the Wisconsin Women's Council or to download a copy of the full report and County Scorecards, visit our web site at <http://womenscouncil.wi.gov>.